



Sketch

New party mould for the jelly set



Martin Wainwright

PINK and wobbly things have an affinity with May Day holidays... whether marching in miners' galas or forming as concepts in the minds of socialist dreamers...

able and accommodating star. Mr Brears observed to a head-nodding party of jelly experts: "What other substance can you think of which can be transparent, opaque, absorb any colour or flavour and sets to any shape you want?" Outside politics, they knew of none...



Porter's curiosity delivers Maximilian from antique obscurity

EDWARD DIXON with the 18th century medal he found trapped behind a drawer in a table due to be auctioned...

"It's a game the porters play - seeing if there are any more secret drawers," he said. "I was examining the way it was made and took out one of the drawers. I happened to bend down and at the very back saw something caught under a piece of paper..."

Review

Surpassing all expectations

Edward Greenfield

Maazel premiere Pittsburgh

WHEN Lorin Maazel announced his plan last year to spend more time composing, after retiring as music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, few really believed him...

Like most works by performer-composers, the Music for Cello and Orchestra is largely eclectic in style and unashamedly tonal, but it is to Maazel's credit that there is no specific influence. This is Maazel's own voice, occasionally as at the very start...

Brown determined to press on with axing older pupils' benefit

Rebecca Smithers Political Correspondent

THE shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, indicated yesterday that he intends to press ahead with controversial proposals to scrap child benefit for 16 to 19-year-olds...



Gordon Brown... action, or 'problems will haunt us'

that will haunt us for many years to come. Mr Brown is particularly unhappy about the unfairness of the current system, with a quarter of the recipients of the 16 to 19-year-olds in private education...

to an integrated Europe, while expressing some caution by stressing the importance of reforms to areas such as the Common Agriculture Policy...

Clampdown on schools in inner city

Donald MacLeod Education Correspondent

SCHOOL inspectors are to be given sweeping powers to investigate education authorities where standards of reading and numeracy are low...

ty's health spokeswoman, who lives in Southwark, rejected the option of local secondary schools for their children. Labour sources said yesterday that Mrs Shephard was trying to catch up with its own published plans for Ofsted and the Audit Commission...

Tory MPs granted £400,000 tax amnesty over company car use

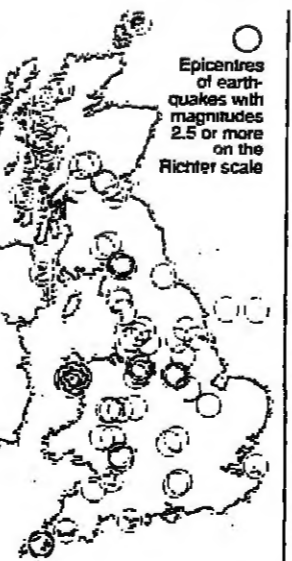
continued from page 1 high because it is designed to buy a new car every three years and covers maintenance and insurance as well as petrol. But MPs who are given company cars as a director's perk or charge their car to their businesses have none of the costs of replacement tax or insurance...

tax at 40 per cent on the parliamentary mileage as a benefit in kind. In some cases it sought seven years' back tax. This move, Mr Dorell to agree to meet Mr Stern and another unnamed Tory MP on behalf of up to 30 Conservatives...

Earthquake rattles crockery in the Potteries

Tim Radford Science Editor

THE earthquake that rattled crockery in the Potteries, set off security alarms and shocked people awake at Burslem at 4.50am yesterday registered 2.6 on the Richter scale...



shallow. We have not heard of any damage to buildings; it was not violent enough for that, but it was enough to wake thousands of people and upset animals and pets...

Actor George C Scott ill after claims he groped assistant

Ian Katz in New York

VETERAN actor George C Scott was undergoing tests in a Malibu hospital yesterday after falling seriously ill after his personal assistant alleged sexual harassment...

way revival of Inherit the Wind, was accused last week of repeatedly attempting to kiss and grope his assistant, Julia Wright. Ms Wright, a 28-year-old film student, claimed the Oscar-winning star of Patton: Lust For Glory made unwanted advances towards her after hiring her last year. She is suing the actor for \$3.1 million.

Advertisement for Nokia 1610 mobile phone. Includes features like 'NEW GSM MODEL 1610', 'Up to 100 hrs standby-time', 'Up to 3.5 hrs talk-time', and 'FREE 50 MINUTES PER MONTH CALLS IN MAY, JUNE & JULY'. Price listed as £9.99 inc. VAT.

Open political... lets

W

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1985 Oleg Gordievsky, a former KGB agent in London, escapes to Britain from Moscow, after a decade of spying for MI6.

1989 11 British diplomats and journalists are expelled from the Soviet Union in a tit-for-tat after Britain expelled the same number of alleged Soviet spies, shortly after Gorbachev made an apparently successful visit to Britain.

1991 Foreign secretary Douglas Hurd tells Russia to end its "large-scale intelligence activity" in Britain.



1993 Michael Smith, electronics engineer, is sentenced to 25 years for passing secrets to Russia, including details of Britain's nuclear-weapons programme. He had been recruited 20

years earlier by Victor Oschenko, a KGB agent who defected to Britain in 1992.



1994, Feb Aldrich Ames, a senior CIA officer, is arrested and accused of selling secrets to Moscow since 1985, when he exposed Gordievsky and 13 CIA agents in Russia.

1994, March Vadim Sintsov, a Russian working for the equivalent of Britain's Defence Research Agency confesses to passing secrets to MI6.

1994, April Moscow expels John Scarlett, whom it describes as head of MI6 station in Russia. Britain expels Russian embassy official in London in tit-for-tat.

1995 Alexander Malikov, London correspondent for Russian TV station, Ostankino, expelled.



1995 Russian Federal Security Service claims to have identified and expelled more than 50 foreign agents.

1996, Feb Moscow departs a British businessman, Nigel Shakespear. He was also among those expelled in 1989, when he was Britain's assistant military attache.

1996, March MI5 says Russian intelligence services "have renewed their efforts to post intelligence officers in London".

# Open season puts cat among mice

## Political alarm as chaos lets in spies

David Hearst in Moscow and Richard Norton-Taylor

WHATEVER else Boris Yeltsin's destruction of the Soviet Union has achieved in the last five years, one fact remains clear: it has provided a field day for Western intelligence services out to recruit informers in the once potent Russian military-industrial complex.

Two years ago, the Russian federal counter intelligence service (FCS) announced it had uncovered more spies in 1994 than in the previous five to seven years. According to the FCS, after the KGB was dismantled in 1991 with its major services being centralised, the world's leading intelligence agencies enjoyed an opportunity of "almost untroubled" operation in Russia, establishing networks sweeping over the Russian state and its political structures.

All the conditions necessary to recruit foreign agents pertained: loss of the state's authority, poor territorial integrity and the emergence of Russia's so-called "glass borders", poor wages, and a world turned upside down where street traders could earn more than a nuclear physicist.

Above all, patriotic Russians lost their national pride, the self-belief in a tran-

sitional period which was more a revolution than a turbulent reform.

The chaos of post-communist reform provided conditions analogous to the Soviet Union's most effective recruitment period in Western Europe, the collapse of Nazi Germany. Leonid Shebarshin, the last head of KGB's First Chief Directorate, the largest spy network in the world, said the same was now happening now in reverse.

In today's Russia, with only six weeks to go before a pivotal election, there are powerful political reasons why the old KGB empire may be feeling the need to strike back at the level of foreign infiltration. Mikhail Barsukov, the head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), responsible for uncovering and arresting the Russian who allegedly confessed to working for MI6, is himself in a need of good publicity.

Mr Barsukov has not enjoyed a good reign since he emerged from beneath the patronage of Lt General Alexander Korzhakov, the head of the presidential bodyguard, to take the most politically exposed job in the "force ministries". The last time he took personal command of an operation was against Chechen hostage takers — and that ended in humiliation.

Earlier this year, Mr Yeltsin accused western intelligence agencies of undermin-



Mikhail Barsukov (top left), head of the organisation that arrested a Russian who allegedly worked for MI6; Alexander Korzhakov, head of the presidential bodyguard; and the British embassy in Moscow

ing Russia's military potential and of organising a brain drain of the country's most talented military scientists. Before an election it is important to show the FSB is active. As the Russian proverb goes when talking about someone who is not doing his job well: "He is not catching mice." By catching a British spy, the FSB is showing that the Russian cat is not entirely asleep. "The FSB is looking for a spy at any price," Oleg Gordievsky, the KGB defector now living in Britain, said last night. "A political gesture in the middle of an elec-



tion campaign shows that Yeltsin is patriotic and wary about the West." According to the FSB's published statements, western intelligence agencies are primarily interested in Russia's strategy in future co-operation with other countries in its Confederation of Independent States. They want to know how Russia plans to respond to the eastward expansion of Nato, as well as the potential capability of its nuclear programme and high technology military-industrial base.

This, says the FSB, places the underpaid workers of the defence ministry's industrial complex at risk. Russia still has many high technology secrets, particularly in the field of light metal alloy technology for use in its own stealth weapons programme. Russia also has a lead in low-flying aqua-planes, a technology being developed in its defence factories in Nizhni Novgorod. The West is seeking better control of Russia's nuclear stockpile. It wants to know how much weapons-grade plutonium and high enriched uranium are being held as a result of the dismantling of its

intercontinental ballistic missile fleet. Since the end of the cold war, MI6 has reduced the amount of resources devoted to Russia by two-thirds. A clue to its priorities is contained in a recent report from parliament's intelligence and security committee. It said that while Whitehall's intelligence analysts did not believe Russia posed any "direct military threat", it retained "a formidable strategic capability". It added that Russian military equipment was being "aggressively marketed around the world".

## A throwback to the bad old days

Ian Black Diplomatic Editor

ANGLO-RUSSIAN relations have undergone a sea-change since the end of the cold war, but yesterday's expulsion of diplomats from the British embassy in Moscow is a chilly throwback to the bad old days.

Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, has repeatedly said that Britain's greatest international concern is stability in Russia — facing a key test as Boris Yeltsin is challenged by Gennady Zyuganov, the communist candidate, in next month's presidential elections.

Specifically, Britain worries about effective control of Russia's still-mighty nuclear arsenal and, generally, about the continuation of the country's reform process, personified by Mr Yeltsin. Suggestions at the weekend that the June 18 election might be postponed caused alarm.

Yet the dangers of identifying too closely with President Yeltsin were underlined during last month's Moscow summit. Publicly endorsing Mr Yeltsin, the Prime Minister, John Major, was given a none-too-subtle hint by Mr Zyuganov to stay out of Russia's internal affairs. On the face of it, things

have changed beyond recognition since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Queen's visit to Moscow and St Petersburg in October 1994 set the tone of a new level of relations.

Britain has worked hard within the European Union to build friendly ties with Russia, but sharp disagreements over Bosnia, the war in Chechnya and angry reactions from Moscow to Nato expansion have caused frictions.

Bilaterally, Britain has helped Russia's transition to a free-market economy and has backed generous loans from the International Monetary Fund. Royal Air Force crews have inspected Russian airfields and British ministers have boarded nuclear-powered ships on the Kola peninsula. There has even been a quiet co-operation between the two countries' intelligence and security services in areas such as terrorism and organised crime.

But Britain has found that its ability to influence Russia's policies is extremely limited as Moscow takes a more assertive view of its international role. Last night, allegations of spying were being seen in the wider context of Russia's volatile domestic politics, but the episode will fuel concerns that the broader relationship with Britain is becoming fragile.

## Pilgrims pay homage to the man with the golden shares

Mark Tran in Omaha

THERE was a time when the annual meeting of Berkshire Hathaway, the phenomenally successful investment company run by Warren Buffett, was a cosy affair. But now the event has taken on the trappings of the Super Bowl as thousands make the pilgrimage to Omaha.

Mr Buffett, who recently overtook Microsoft's Bill Gates as America's richest man, has a net worth of \$16.6 billion (£11 billion) according to Forbes magazine. The annual meeting's festivities traditionally begin with Saturday's baseball game, featuring the Omaha Royals, partly owned by Mr Buffett of course.

That was followed by Sunday's reception for more than 5,000 shareholders at Berkshire's jewellery store, where a queue snaked past the world's biggest diamond, the Golden Jubilee, a 545-carat monster on loan from Thailand.

Yesterday, in the huge Palace ballroom of the Holiday Inn Convention Centre, Mr Buffett, with his partner and friend Charlie Munger at his side, got down to business, answering questions from early morning until the afternoon. The event has ballooned to

such an extent, that three overflow rooms were booked and most people watched Mr Buffett on six giant video screens — prompting one of the elderly stockholders to complain that the Legend was losing touch with reality.

In this year's letter to his shareholders he compared his two-pronged approach of either buying entire companies or buying a modest percentage to a line from Woody Allen: "The real advantage of being bisexual is that it doubles your chance for a date on a Saturday night." Mr Buffett has a penchant for Hollywood lines, also quoting Mase West: "It's not what you've got — it's what you do with what you've got."

You usually hear two refrains from investors in Berkshire Hathaway, which has invested in insurance, newspapers, and consumer product companies: they wish they had bought more and earlier. Most of the shareholders at the annual meeting own one, two or three shares — Berkshire Hathaway shares are the most expensive on Wall Street, going for well over \$50,000 (£20,000) a share. If someone had invested \$10,000 (£6,700) with Mr Buffett when he began in Omaha in 1956 and stuck with him he would have about \$8 million (£2.2 million) today.

During the promotion of the heavyweight title fight between Lennox Lewis and Tony Tucker, Maloney became the subject of a 'sustained and ferocious campaign of vilification' from the court of Don King

G2 page 4

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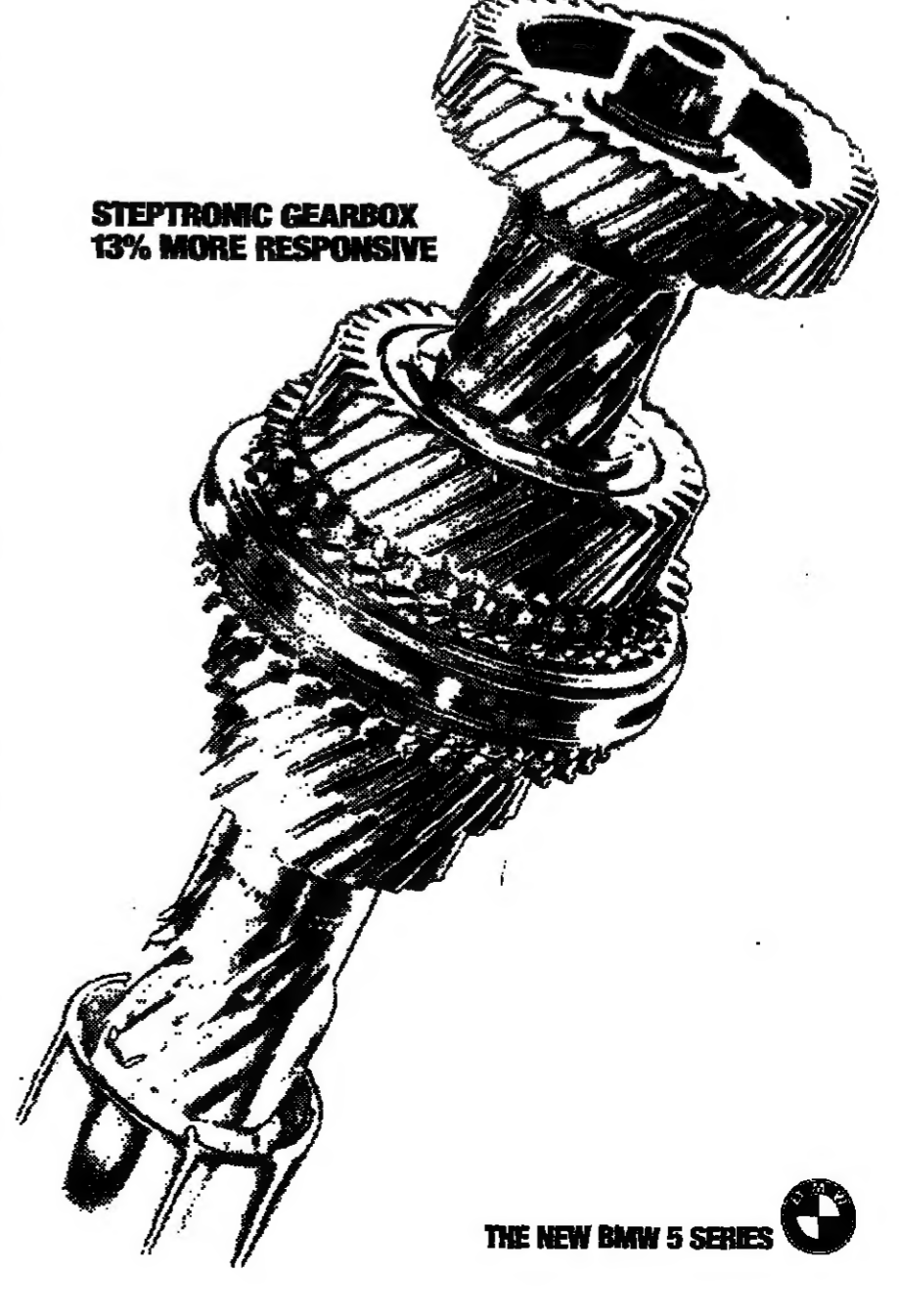
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# City offers 'levy' for transport

Michael White  
Political Editor

**T**HE Treasury is resisting a new scheme proposed by the City to raise the funds for much-needed public transport projects by asking larger firms to pay what amounts to voluntary taxes.

The blueprint, which is supported by the Corporation of London, would offer businesses a vote — or several votes for big firms — on whether or not to back specific transport schemes, from a local tramline to large projects such as the long-stalled CrossRail link.

If a majority of firms in the scheme agreed, even those which voted "no" would be expected to pay up over several years.

Local authorities would collect the money on top of business rates.

Whitehall's hostility is partly political — fear of covert tax — and partly the result of long-standing opposition to the ring-fencing of general taxes for a defined purpose.

Despite fashionable support for the private finance initiative as a means of easing the tax burden, hardline Treasury officials may also claim that an "infrastructure levy" would count against the public sector borrowing requirement.

Its supporters brush such objections aside. The revenue generated would guarantee income which would in turn generate more funds. If techniques developed in the United States can be adapted to British needs, enthusiasts say it need not be confined to public transport improvements, much needed in London and other cities.

Car park schemes, tree planting and even keeping streets free of vagrants are big issues in Houston, Texas, where civic traditions are weak and municipal powers slight. But Treasury ministers, jittery about any that snacks of extra taxes, have been cool towards the City's suggestions.

In particular, ministers fear small businesses in the suburbs which already pay substantial sums under the unified business rate, could be forced out of business by such levies. Supporters say they could be excluded from the levy and the vote.

After a version of the unified business rate "supplement" was floated by London First, the lobby group chaired by Tory businessman Lord Shepherd, the Department of Transport was cautious.

It admitted that it "could be levied on larger businesses in central and inner London... the idea is an interesting one which would have considerable attractions if it could be made to work on a genuinely voluntary basis."

But the department's transport strategy published last week stressed that London First's version was a tax and the spending which it supported would be public expenditure. It still claimed to favour the private finance initiative approach that the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, is promoting.

A recent paper for the Greater London Authority said that at least £700 million a year for 10 years is needed to make up for past neglect on London's Underground alone. Alternatives to a levy could include extra taxes or road pricing — from which ministers have backed down in face of the motoring lobby.



Kielder Lake in Northumbria, once seen as a 'white elephant' but now a regional life-saver expected to attract thousands to its shores for weekend festivals. PHOTOGRAPH: TOM FINNE

## Festival fetes derided liquid asset

Martin Wainwright  
on a dam good do

**F**LAGE dancers and giant inflatable eggs are about to help celebrate a "white elephant" reservoir which has become a regional life-saver in drought-stricken Britain.

Thousands of visitors are expected along the 27-mile shoreline of Kielder Lake in Northumbria on the last two weekends of this month, to mark the "unique, ever-changing" mixture of forest and water, once condemned as environmental vandalism.

Two hundred Northumbrian pipers will open a free trail designed by disabled young people, while students and a Dutch theatre company create an "entirely other" world on Bull Crag, opposite Kielder's mile-long dam.

The festival will focus North-eastern regional pride in "Our Kielder", whose 44 billion gallon capacity remained above 80 per cent even in last year's drought.

Built in the 1970s to cope with a new British Steel plant on Teesside, it flooded a wild valley and several hamlets and caused uproar.

"The water board was accused of creating a white elephant, building a white elephant and making the largest boating lake in Europe," said Andrew Panton, of Northumbrian Water yesterday. "There were two public inquiries, and an outcry when British Steel decided to move to South Wales instead."

The shift in public opinion has been almost complete since the Queen opened it in 1982, along with water links allowing

Kielder to maintain flows in the rivers Tyne, Tees, Derwent and Wear.

Kielder has also been important in attracting new industry to the North-east, including a Siemens electronics plant on Tyne and a Fujitsu one at Newton Aycliffe, which uses as much water every day as a town of 30,000 people.

But the festival coincides with renewed controversy over Kielder, as drought-stricken Yorkshire completes plans for an emergency tap on the huge lake, via the Tees and new £45 million pipelines. The Environment Agency this week registered concern about Kielder's colder water destroying flora and fauna in the Yorkshire rivers, and is expected to sanction the link only as a last resort.

### Kielder festival

## Banks 'profit from charity'

Owen Bowcott

**A**CITY consortium involving six of the main clearing banks has been making excessive profits by lending cash to a government-funded charity for the disabled, according to a leaked accountant's report.

The allegation comes shortly before publication of a long-awaited National Audit Office inquiry examining the complex relationship between the charity Motability and its associated company, Motability Finance Limited, the largest car fleet operator in Britain.

Disabled clients of the charity have also been encouraged to buy unsuitable cars, for which MFL had fleet discounts, rather than cheaper and more appropriate vehicles, Channel 4's Dispatches programme claims tomorrow.

MFL, a joint venture between Barclays, NatWest, Midland, Lloyds, the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Bank of Scotland, has been at the centre of controversy throughout the last year. The problem has been exacerbated by an accounting system which channels money through several companies.

Critics of the scheme, which has leased cars to the

disabled since 1977, allege that MFL has been making undeserved profits by lending capital to Motability at above the market level of interest rates. The loans are devoid of risk, it is said, since they are backed by government-funded disability allowance payments.

An internal accountant's report, produced by the merchant bank Schroders for the governors of Motability in late 1995 and obtained by Dispatches, suggests that interest rates charged to the charity were higher than they should have been. "The current monies arranged in 1993 appear now to be out of line with the market," the report notes. Instead of charging 1.25 per cent per annum they should have been charging 0.75 per cent, it suggests.

Mick and Annette Reynolds, of Nottingham, claim in the programme they were told they should lease a Ford Transit van even though it did not have room for an electric wheelchair lift.

The Charity Commissioners are in correspondence with Motability over the issue but are awaiting the NAO report, due to be published next month. Motability and MFL have declined to comment on the claims until the report has been published.

## Steel tubes used to correct heart malformation

Chris Mihill  
Medical Correspondent

**B**ABIES born with a life-threatening narrowing of the coronary arteries can be helped by a procedure using steel tubes to hold the blood vessels open, heart specialists report today.

Every year about 6,000 babies are born with congenital malformations of the heart and blood vessels. In about 5 per cent the defect involves a narrowing of the artery which carries blood from the heart to the lungs. The resulting obstruction can be life-threatening or severely disabling, and children with this

type of narrowing may suffer from shortage of breath.

The condition can be difficult to treat surgically, and a number of procedures have been tried, but the obstruction can recur.

James Taylor and colleagues are today to tell the annual meeting of the British Cardiac Society in Glasgow of a successful approach using stents — tubes of stainless steel — to widen and support the narrowed section of the blood vessel.

The stents are guided at the end of a catheter, with another catheter over it to prevent its getting caught during the delicate positioning procedure. Once in position the catheters are withdrawn, leaving the stent in place.

Dr Taylor, from the Great Ormond Street hospital for children, in London, said: "We have treated 23 patients aged between seven months and 19 years, most of whom have had narrowing in one or both arteries to the lungs. In most cases we have achieved a permanent increase in the size of the vessel, a fall in blood pressure difference across the narrowed segment, and an improvement in the patient's symptoms."

"It must be made clear that this technically demanding procedure is not always successful and not without risk, but this must be put into the

context of a progressively disabling condition and the risk of a further difficult surgical operation."

Elderly people can benefit as well as younger ones from repairs to a heart valve, surgeons will tell the meeting.

Mitral valve disease is common in the elderly and is a frequent cause of disability and death. The mitral valve is situated between the two left chambers of the heart (atrium and ventricle) and controls the flow of blood between them.

If the valve becomes diseased and leaky, oxygenated blood in the left ventricle — the main pumping chamber — flows back into the left

atrium instead of being pumped out of the heart and around the body.

Most patients tolerate a moderate degree of leaking but become increasingly breathless, and heart failure develops. Diseased valves can be repaired surgically or replaced with an artificial valve.

Leonard Shapiro and colleagues in the regional cardiac unit at Papworth Hospital, Cambridge, have studied 614 patients treated for mitral valve disease.

They found that operating early in the disease, before the condition of the patient had deteriorated, was one of the most important factors in

success, regardless of the age of the patient.

Many cholesterol tests are being misdirected at people with a low risk of heart disease, while those at high risk are being missed, according to Caroline Morrison, a consultant in public health medicine with the Greater Glasgow Health Board. She looked at some 400 people who had received cholesterol tests. About 40 per cent needed them because of heart disease or a number of risk factors — but 80 per cent of those tested were at low risk.

"We need to educate the public and produce better guidelines for doctors about who needs a test."

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MAY 11TH BIRMINGHAM, ACADEMY

## Arson police talk to man

David Pallister

**A**MAN was being questioned about an arson attack on a Southampton council house in which four brothers and sisters aged between eight and 12 died.

Their parents, Evelyn and Beverly Good, and an older daughter, Kelly, aged 14, survived by scrambling out of a first floor window and on to a conservatory roof. Kelly was badly burned and is expected to be kept in the Odstock hospital, Salisbury, Wiltshire, for at least a week.

After forensic scientists confirmed that the blaze was deliberate, Detective Superintendent Peter Neyroud said he was trying to find out if anyone had a grudge against the family. The man "helping the police with their inquiries" was found within a few hours of the fire in the Southampton area.

The fire started early on Sunday morning. The four who died from inhalation of toxic fumes — Terry, 12, Allison, 10, Nicola, eight, and Patrick, six — were found on the floor of a back bedroom.

The police have not yet talked to the couple or Kelly in detail. "I don't want to



Local children prepare flowers to leave at the scene of the Southampton fire in which four brothers and sisters died.

push a family that is so heavily traumatised into answering questions," Supt Neyroud said.

"Four children have died. Words almost fail me. It is almost impossible to think of the mind of someone who may have set light to a house with a family in it."

Mrs Good's father, Thomas Fryer, aged 78, who visited

the burned-out house in Sullivan Road, Sholing, said his daughter told him: "Dad, I wish none of us had woken up and we'd all died together."

Police are investigating reports of five men standing near the house shouting, "Burn, you bastards, burn" but would not confirm accounts that Kelly saw a man whom she knew pour petrol through the letter box.

## Beef ban hopes recede

Stephen Bates in Brussels

**T**HE Government's hopes of securing at least a partial lifting of the EU ban on British beef were receding last night as Douglas Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, lobbied his fellow ministers at an informal meeting in the Italian city of Otranto.

That meeting is not empowered to take decisions on lifting the ban. It comes less than seven days after the formal agriculture council in Luxembourg, when Britain was warned that further measures would be needed, and ministers are still not prepared to reach an accommodation with the British government.

Beef sales have slumped across Europe by an average of more than 30 per cent in the wake of the BSE scare, even in countries like Germany which were not importing British beef.

Agriculture ministers have warned that they want to see a meeting in Brussels today and tomorrow, but they will not be formally discussing the beef crisis or a lifting of the embargo on by-products.

To do so, they would require a recommendation from the European Commission, which said yesterday it was still not in a position to back lifting the ban.

Meanwhile, the commission will today announce that it is making a grant of more than £1 million to China for genetic improvement of its water buffaloes.

The project, which will fund research into boosting the milk and meat yields of buffaloes in three provinces, to improve sources of urban food supplies, is to be announced by Sir Leon Brittan, the trade commissioner, during a visit to China.

Teressa Gorman, the Tory Eurosceptic MP, yesterday described the grant as "indecisive gesture politics".

## Britain close to sweet victory over chocolate

Martin Wainwright

**B**ITAIN is close to winning its "chocolate war" with rival states in Europe whose confectionery lobbies are battling against the likes of chocolate oranges and Kit-Kat.

A draft directive from the European Commission, released yesterday, recommends allowing local choice in the small but hotly-contested world of chocolate recipes.

Commissioners have snubbed a campaign to outlaw the small dose of vegetable oil traditional in Britain. "This is a victory for common sense," said Hugh Bayley, Labour MP for York, which houses Row-

tree Nestlé and Terry's. "It was bizarre and unacceptable that other European countries wanted to ban our traditional recipe. Europe has got to be flexible and respect the differences between member states."

The draft must still be approved by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, but both are expected to accept it.

Spin-paintings and carved-up cows, cement-cast houses, foetus earrings and giant iron angels may excite comment and derision, but they have never equalled the bricks as a symbol

Communist urges candidates to respect outcome

# Yeltsin promises poll will go ahead

David Hearst in Moscow

**G**ENNADY Zyuganov, the Russian Communist leader and main challenger to Boris Yeltsin, yesterday called on all candidates in next month's presidential election to sign a pact to abide by the outcome. Mr Zyuganov made his call after a rocky 24 hours in Russian politics sparked by the suggestion by the president's chief bodyguard and closest political confidant, Lieutenant-General Alexander Korzhakov, that the election be postponed. Gen Korzhakov claimed the vote could lead to a civil war.

Gen Korzhakov was overruled by President Yeltsin who said yesterday the election would go ahead.

But Mr Yeltsin characteristically muddled the waters by conceding that the general was not alone in believing a Communist victory could spark turmoil.

The president's pledge was swiftly welcomed by the Clinton administration. "We've stressed the importance of the June 16 election and the certainty of the democratic process," the White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, declared. Whether the Communists were returned to power, was "a question for

the Russian people to address in a free and fair election."

Speaking in Bonn, Mr Zyuganov said: "We must guarantee the elections are carried out in a strictly democratic, honest and legal fashion, and at the same time sit around a table with all the parties and movements and sign an agreement that the outcome of the election, as expressed by voters, will be sacred."

Earlier Mr Yeltsin was anything but convincing about his pledge to respect the wisdom of Russian voters. "Korzhakov is not alone in thinking that a victory of Zyuganov would be the start of a civil war," he said.

In a separate interview with the Russian business magazine Delovye Lyudy, he likened the possibility of Mr Zyuganov taking power to the Bolshevik revolution.

"I would not say today that the process of reform has gone so far that it cannot be reversed," Mr Yeltsin warned. "I am convinced that they [the Communists] are preparing to act without any limitations, like what happened after 1917."

The Communist chairman of the lower house of parliament, Gennady Seleznyov, said there were no grounds to delay the poll and accused Mr Yeltsin of "rocking the boat". Vladimir Lukin, a founding

member of the Yabloko party, whose leader, Grigory Yavlinsky, is also running for president, said Gen Korzhakov's remarks "smell of intrigue". The extreme nationalist, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, said: "The authorities understand that they are losing."

Mr Yeltsin's clique of advisers has every reason to fear a change in Kremlin management, not least because they know how easily in the past he has come to pragmatic deals with his political opponents. A recent meeting with Mr Yavlinsky has sparked rumours that Mr Yeltsin offered him the post of prime minister in return for his support.

Mr Yeltsin is still trailing by six points in the opinion polls, having made up much lost ground through anti-Communism, overt election handouts to a wide variety of disgruntled voters, and efforts to make peace in Chechnya.

But his populist promise, made in Yekaterinburg a month ago, to pay off the entire backlog of unpaid wages in March, has not worked. Only 20 per cent of the arrears have been paid, and Mr Yeltsin continues to face a hostile reception from pensioners on election walkabouts in provincial cities.

Leader comment, page 6; Pass Notes, G2 page 3



Shooting pool... Young members of the former Soviet Union's only underwater photography club in Kharkiv, Ukraine PHOTOGRAPH: SERGEY DOLZHERKO

## Spain 'may shut Rock frontier'

Adela Gooch in Madrid

**S**PAIN'S new conservative government has threatened to sever all links with Gibraltar unless smuggling from the British colony is curtailed.

"If measures adopted by the outgoing government prove insufficient we will have to increase the pressure," Abel Matutes told Spanish newspapers just hours after being named foreign minister.

"I hope it will not prove necessary to shut down all communication once again, but we are willing to take any alternative action we consider necessary. We are not ruling anything out," he said.

Spanish commentators interpreted the remarks as a return to the harsh stance adopted by General Franco, who closed the frontier from 1969 to 1982, isolating the Rock to all but air travel to Britain and ship travel. Franco mistakenly predicted that "Gibraltar would fall like an overripe plum".

The previous Socialist government opened the border and began regular talks with Britain, but the issue flared up again recently over speedboats based in the colony and used to smuggle drugs and tobacco to Spain.

Madrid retaliated with extensive border searches, which cause long queues for Gibraltarans going to and from Spain.

Mr Matutes's comments come at a particularly sensitive time — in the run-up to general election in Gibraltar next week. The incumbent chief minister, Joe Bossano, favours greater independence but eschews any links with Spain, while his main opponents consider the Rock's eco-

## Spanish village laments what the bishop said to the actress

Our correspondent in Madrid

**T**HE PEOPLE of La Iglesia del Cid, a hamlet in the remote Spanish region of Teruel, had been reveling in their 13 minutes of fame. But they watched in despair yesterday as the American actress Faye Dunaway was forced by a bishop to leave.

A 35 million peseta (£175,000) contract had been negotiated for Ms Dunaway and her 70-strong crew to film in the square and at an 11th century shrine to the Virgin Mary and the warrior El Cid. The mayor, Jose Miguel Cruz, backed the project, hoping it would put La Iglesia, an ailing agricultural community, on the tourist map.

But the local bishop, Antonio Alorga, reacted angrily when his permission was asked to film the shrine, declaring: "The subject matter — the sexual relations of a young man with an older woman in the context of blackmail, adultery, and prostitution — must not be associated with the Virgin."

The director, Antonio Lombardo, described the film — In the Arms of an Older Woman — as a poignant encounter between two people during the Spanish civil war and urged Bishop Alorga to read the script.

National media focused on the row as villagers pleaded for a change of heart. But the bishop was adamant and Ms Dunaway and the crew moved on.

"It was a unique opportunity and we've lost it," lamented a villager.

## Bossi puts the boot in Italian nation state

A speech demanding self-determination for the north has alarmed the rest of the country. John Hooper in Rome reports

**N** TYPICALLY flamboyant yet subtly equivocal fashion, Umberto Bossi, the leader of the Northern League, has put the future of Italy's rich north back at the top of the political agenda two weeks after a general election day as the American actress Faye Dunaway was forced by a bishop to leave.

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ral visit to the north, begged Roman Catholics to work for the "common good of the entire national community".

Mr Bossi backtracked a little yesterday, insisting his views were not yet League policy. Commentators speculated that his real aim was a federal arrangement negotiated with the central government.

The League, standing alone under a mainly first-past-the-post system that favours broad alliances, did unexpectedly well at last month's general election. It will provide almost one in 10 of Italy's new legislators, but will not hold the balance of power, as it did before the poll.

The separatist issue has given the League a higher profile than it would otherwise have had.

"The people who vote for the League are not voting for a separate Padania. They are voting against what Bossi calls the Roman robbers, and to a slightly lesser extent they are voting against the south and against immigrants," said Patrick McCarthy, professor of European studies at

the Johns Hopkins Centre in Bologna and author of a book called *The Crisis of the Italian State*. "The reform movement in Italy has been going since 1992, but it still hasn't succeeded in satisfying those in the richest parts of the country."

Polls suggest that most northern Italians regard the idea of an independent state as unrealistic, though more than half view it as potentially advantageous.

Fears have been expressed that Mr Bossi may be unleashing forces he will be unable to control. Last weekend's parliament was the first to be guarded by a new body, the League's Green Shirts.

For the moment, they are a 40-strong internal security force. But what they are intended to become is not clear.

One League deputy said their uniform symbolised the movement's attachment to "the fields and fresh grass of our plains". He foresaw them "protecting the forests which are under so much threat".

Another said they represented the nucleus of a National Guard of the North, or GNN.

"The state has its carabinieri, the police, the revenue guard, the forestry guards. And we have the GNN, volunteers for the freedom of the north. We shall set out a big book, and anyone who wants to join up can — men, women and children."



Umberto Bossi: 'It is time to divide up the country'

## Albania's 'avowed virgins' wear the trousers

Steve Pagan in Bajza

**D**EEP in the barren mountains of northern Albania, a group of women clings to a tradition as old as the blood feuds that have returned to the region.

Poverty, war and vendettas which wiped out the male line of a family meant women, and sometimes girls, would take control of the household.

Many believed the custom had died out with the feudal system that communist leaders tried to eradicate.

er's request that she head the family of 10 daughters and one son. The boy was considered too weak for the job.

"I am never regarded as a woman but as a man," said Lula, aged 41, as she sat chain-smoking in her elder sister's one-room home in the rural town of Bajza, 90 miles north of Tirana.

"Usually if the men have been killed either through war or blood feuds, then a woman has the power to take over the defence of the family. But it was more often because of blood feuds," she said.

Lula's sister Marije and other female family members wear long dark dresses, and black scarves or white headwraps. Lula has cropped hair and wears a sweatshirt and trousers.

"I've never worn a dress or scarf. At weddings and on special occasions, I put on a suit, shirt and tie," she said.

After years in male company, Lula sits and gesticulates like a man.

She was originally known as Lule but changed her name to the more masculine form, Lula. She has spent most of

her working life driving a tractor, and is now an experienced welder.

The tradition of "avowed virgins" is believed to have originated in a remote community called Kelmendi, the birthplace of the 17th century "warrior virgin" Nora.

According to legend, Nora stabbed to death a conquering Ottoman pasha who wanted to marry her. She fled into the hills and led resistance against the Turks. She was eventually caught, but the Turks recorded her the "privilege" of being executed as a man. — Reuter.

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# Zaire's miracle man runs out of luck

**F**OR Israel Ciswaka, his pastor's arrest, torture and dispatch to a Zairean military prison for 12 months hard labour was confirmation that there is a God after all. "He warned us in a sermon that God had told him the army was coming for him, and one hour later what he preached happened. We are joyous to see that the word of God came true," Mr Ciswaka said.

Others consider it less than a miracle that Fernando Kuthino, pastor of the Army of Victory church, was jailed by a military tribunal last month for allegedly stockpiling weapons. Rev Kuthino was becoming an increasingly powerful and controversial voice in the competitive world of Zairean religion.

Evangelical churches have flourished since Zaire began its laboured transition to democracy in 1980. Crowds are drawn to ministries popping up in garages and abandoned stores as much by the daily grind of poverty as by greater religious freedom. And some pastors are discovering that religion is a good way to make money.

The model is America. The Jimmy Swagart, disgraced home front after being caught with a prostitute, frequently graces Zairean television screens. Pat Robertson, an American who blends fiery preaching and right-wing politics, pays regular visits to Zaire.

Rev Robertson has proven himself a loyal ally of President Mobutu Sese Séko in the

US, in return for a free hand to pursue business interests in Zaire, including diamond mining.

Most of the new churches are Protestant, encouraged by President Mobutu to counter Roman Catholic criticism of his reign. Moonies and Jehovah's Witnesses have found growing audiences, while Baptists and Pentecostals have recently latched on to the pygmy population as a source of recruits.

Even one of President Mobutu's most prominent cohorts has taken to evangelism with a passion. Honore Ngbanda is popularly known as "The Terminator" because of those said to have died at the hands of the intelligence service he once led. Today he runs a Christian cafe, insists on being called Brother

**Pastor Fernando Kuthino promised everything from a place in heaven to a cure for Aids, but he was no match for President Mobutu, writes Chris McGreal in Kinshasa**



Ngbanda, and regularly appears on television to preach the virtues of strict adherence to biblical teachings.

Rev Kuthino is one of Zaire's best known preachers. He appeared on television

each Sunday and launched his own radio station. A photograph on a wall of his Miracle Centre offers a clue to his style. Fitted out in a white turtleneck, aviator sunglasses and faded denim jacket with his thumbs stuck in his belt, Rev Kuthino looks more like a country music singer than a pastor. But to the envy of his competitors, he proved adept at fund-raising from foreign churches.

Rev Kuthino's followers believe that his influence — and his message — was his downfall. After a stint with Rev Robertson's Assemblies of God ministry in Virginia, he returned to Zaire six years ago and launched the Army of Victory. It promised everything from a place in heaven to a cure for Aids.

Its Miracle Centre is packed for services, with throbbing Zairean music carrying way beyond its walls. Nailed up behind Rev Kuthino's pulpit are the discarded crutches of those said to have benefited. "People come here to get

healed from Aids and any kind of illness, or just to escape life outside these walls. We give them hope," said Egide Bomper, one of the ministry's officials.

Old-style evangelists, such as Jacques Vernand, dismiss the likes of Rev Kuthino as akin to devil-worshippers. "These people are dangerous because Zaireans swallow anything — any new teaching, any new doctrine or sect. These preachers are blending fetish worship with Christianity," he said.

But the Army of Victory challenges the traditional religious view that the downtrodden should accept their lot in this life, in expectation of relief in the next.

"The difference is we talk about victory in this life," Mr Bomper said. "We say people

do not have to accept hardship, that they do not just have to suffer, that they can fight back against those who make their lives miserable."

Rev Kuthino's supporters said he had been warned off sermons encouraging the poor to challenge exploitation and oppression. A banner hangs across the Miracle Centre, reading: "We use all ways and means possible." But the ministry insists Rev Kuthino encouraged only non-violent resistance.

In February, just before his radio station was to go on air, soldiers burst into the Miracle Centre, claiming to have discovered a weapons cache, and took Rev Kuthino away.

"We never saw any weapons here. They didn't like his popularity and what he had to say," Mr Bomper said.

## S Africa races to beat constitution clock

**David Borensford in Johannesburg**

**S**OUTH AFRICA has 24 hours to avoid a divisive referendum on its new constitution after the main political parties failed last night to break a deadlock over the bitterly contested schools-language issue.

But President Nelson Mandela succeeded in defusing another threatened crisis by persuading Chief Mangosuthu Buthe to accept a month's postponement of local government elections in KwaZulu-Natal.

The Inkatha leader had threatened to withdraw from the government of national unity if the elections, scheduled for May 29, were stalled. But after a meeting of cabinet and party leaders lasting five and a half hours it was announced last night that unanimous agreement had been reached on the delay. The elections are now expected at the end of June.

Inkatha had claimed the African National Congress wanted to postpone the vote because it faced defeat. The ANC in the province, which has been issuing heated denunciations of Inkatha over

the last few days, insists that a fair poll cannot be amid widespread political violence.

On the constitutional front the National Party leader, F. W. de Klerk, emerged from an emergency meeting of his party's federal executive earlier in the day to announce that efforts were being made to find a fresh compromise on the education clause — which is central to the constitutional deadlock — as well as on property and employers' lock-out rights.

Talks are still continuing in an effort to see whether remaining differences can be breached, the deputy president said. The executive and party parliamentary caucus is expected to debate the issue further today.

The constitutional assembly, comprising the two houses of parliament, began debating the constitution yesterday afternoon. The final vote is expected to be taken at midday tomorrow.

The ANC raised temperatures over the language issue by accusing the Nationalists of seeking to return to "apartheid education" and "white Afrikaner privileges".

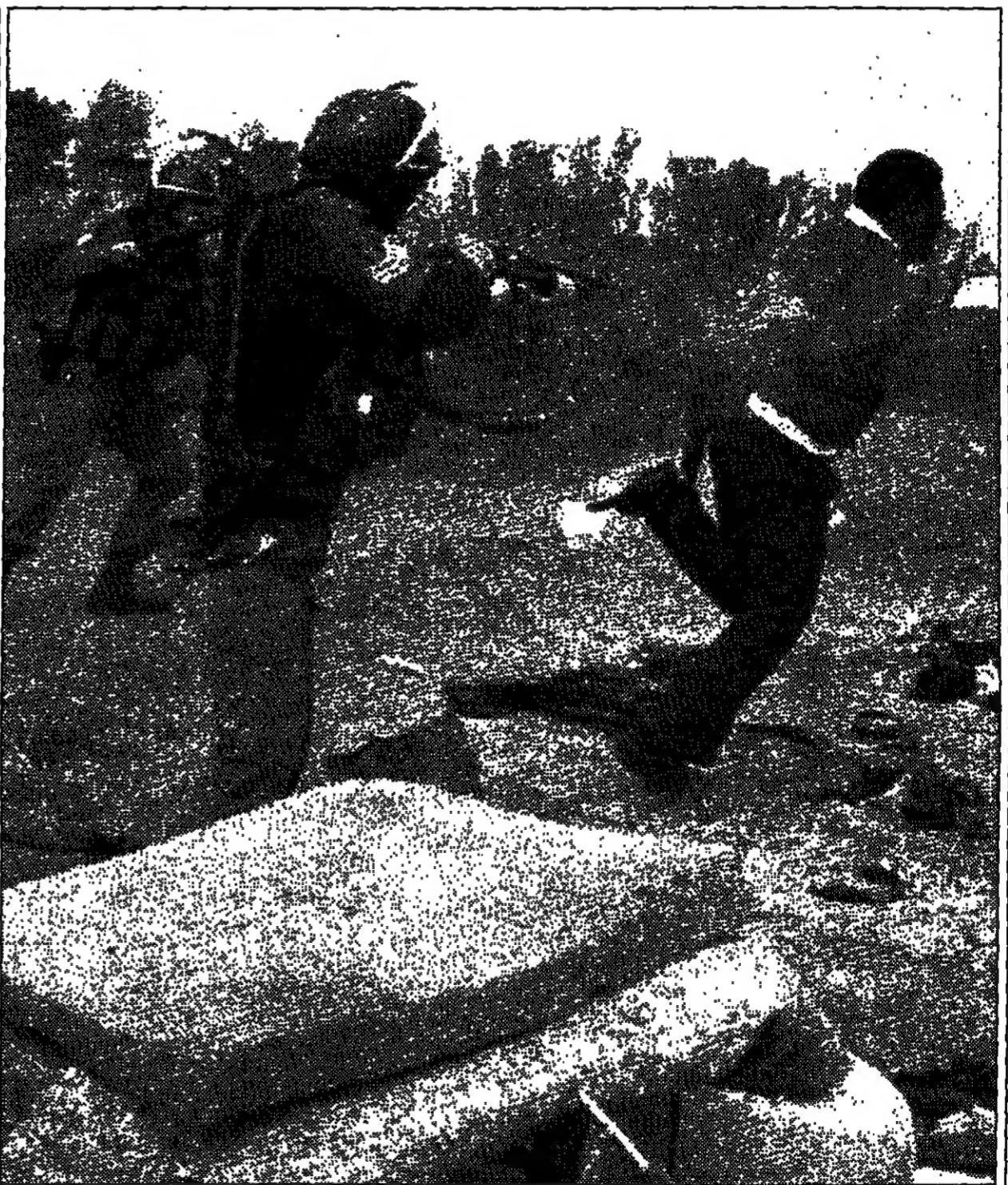
The National Party is demanding constitutional guarantees that Afrikaner chil-

dren will have the right to be taught in Afrikaans. The ANC is insisting that the maintenance or creation of single-medium schools should be an administrative decision subject to practicality.

There is some scepticism as to whether the Nationalists are prepared to pursue the issue to a referendum. The timetable in the present interim constitution obliges the constitutional assembly to approve the draft legislation by a two-thirds majority tomorrow. If it fails to do so, the country could be forced into a referendum.

The danger for the National Party is that the draft put to the vote at a referendum only has to be approved by a simple majority in the constitutional assembly — which the ANC commands. This would give the ANC the option of dumping the version already thrashed out in multi-party talks and presenting to the electorate a hardline draft shorn of compromises on such issues as property rights. A 60 per cent majority is required for the adoption of the constitution at a referendum, which the ANC is likely to achieve.

Letters, page 8



Squatters under siege... Police fire rubber bullets at a squatter in Alexandra township near Johannesburg yesterday. Squatters had refused to move to another site from an area earmarked for development. PHOTOGRAPH BY NICKY DE BLIS

## Police hunting girls' remains investigate cellar tip-off

**David Borensford in Johannesburg**

**A**MURDER mystery which has haunted South Africa for more than six years took a new twist yesterday when police carried out fresh excavations at a house in Pretoria but failed to find the bodies of five missing girls.

Police were hunting for the supposed victims of a paedophile, Gert van Rooyen, in an inquiry which has similarities to the case of Britain's Fred and Rosemary West.

Mr Van Rooyen and his lover, Joey Haarhof, killed themselves in a suicide pact when a girl escaped from their home after being kidnapped and sexually molested. It was established that the other girls, aged between 11 and 13, had been at the house. A country-wide search failed to find them.

Mr Van Rooyen, like Fred West, had a penchant for building extensions to his home. Police excavations at the house in 1990 failed to find any bodies.

A tip-off that there was a hidden cellar prompted the new search with scanning equipment and hydraulic drills. Police said a dog found two girls' hair bands but by last night no other clues had been discovered.

A year after Mr Van Rooyen's death, his son, Phillipus, was sentenced to death for the murder of a young girl. The sentence was commuted to 25 years' imprisonment after an appeal.

Mr Van Rooyen's daughter faces charges relating to claims that she was the subject of an attack in a lift by two satanists who slashed her with a scalpel. She is accused of making up the story, which received wide publicity.

Obituary, page 10

## Biko family asks court not to grant amnesties

**F**AMILIES of three killed anti-apartheid activists asked a court yesterday to stop South Africa's "truth commission" from granting amnesty to anyone involved in human rights violations during white minority rule.

The families of Steve Biko, the black consciousness leader, Grithus Mxenge, a lawyer, and Dr Fabian Ribeiro brought the action in

the Cape Town Supreme Court, saying the amnesties would prejudice their rights to seek civil redress.

An opposing affidavit by a member of the amnesty committee of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission denied that blanket indemnities were given.

The amnesty committee started processing applica-

tions for amnesty 10 days ago, but has not yet granted any.

The truth commission aims to heal the wounds of apartheid by confession, reconciliation and forgiveness in the form of amnesty but the three families say this lets perpetrators off too lightly.

The three were killed by security forces of the white regime that ended with free elections in 1994. — Reuter.

## Peres digs in despite video

**Derek Brown in Jerusalem**

**T**HE Israeli prime minister, Shimon Peres, dismissed renewed claims yesterday that Israeli gunners fired deliberately at a United Nations base in Lebanon packed with refugees.

The new accusations are backed by an amateur UN video of an Israeli unmanned spy plane flying near the Gana camp in South Lebanon as it was being pounded by artillery on April 18.

Mr Peres yesterday stuck by the Israeli army's version of events: a spy plane was flying in the vicinity but was not over the camp. "The army was very careful with its story and the army admitted when it made a mistake. We made a mistake. We are terribly sorry... But we insist the information that was given is correct," he said.

More than 100 Lebanese civilians died in the attack on Gana, and the much vaunted Israeli capacity for precision strikes was gravely undermined by the hideous carnage at the UN camp, in which the presence of refugees was public knowledge.

The confirmation that a pilotless "drone" was operating in the area of the camp at the time is further ammunition for critics, who say the firing was at best cynically callous, and at worst deliberate.

Israel says the shells which hit Gana were fired in response to a Hizbullah rocket and mortar attack. That the shells hit a UN post, said one senior officer in the after-

math of the massacre, was "a regrettable miss and not bad decision-making".

The army initially denied that it had had a drone in the area, and came out with contradictory comments as to whether they knew of the civilian presence at Gana.

A week after the attack, the deputy army chief, Major General Matan Vilnai, said the artillery had not known how many people were in the UN base. "At the time of the shelling we had no drone in the area because the weather conditions made it impossible," he said.

On April 23, the army chief of staff, Lieutenant General Amnon Shahak, said: "We did not know that there were civilians there, but we knew that this was a UN position."

Three days later, the head of military intelligence, Major General Moshe Ya'alon, said that the presence of refugees was known — but not to the artillery command. On Sunday, Maj Gen Vilnai said that inaccurate military maps had caused the "mistake" at Gana.

● Palestinian and Israeli negotiators yesterday ended their first, largely symbolic, talks on a permanent peace settlement, at the Egyptian resort of Taba. The talks will resume after the Israeli general election on May 29.

Meanwhile Israeli soldiers shot and wounded nine Palestinians yesterday in clashes with demonstrators protesting against Israeli land confiscations at the self-ruled enclave of Qalqilya in the West Bank, hospital officials said.

## News in brief

**Body of former CIA director Colby found**

**T**HE body of the former CIA chief, William Colby, aged 76, was washed ashore yesterday on a riverbank south of Washington, nine days after his disappearance, reports *Martin Walker in Washington*.

Police said they saw no reason to suspect foul play, although only an autopsy could decide cause of death. The body was identified by his wife, Sally Shelton Colby, who had maintained all last week that, as a survivor of the second world war and Vietnam, her husband would still be alive.

Colby challenged the CIA's code of silence by revealing its secrets to congressional in-

quiries. He was the only former director of Central Intelligence ever to have been sued by his own agency — over an account in his memoirs of secret operations to recover a sunken Soviet submarine — that had not been authorised for publication.

**Ortega chosen as candidate**

The leftwing Sandinista National Liberation Front overwhelmingly picked the former president, Daniel Ortega, as its presidential candidate for Nicaragua's general elections on October 20.

Mr Ortega received 471 votes from an electorate of 640 on Sunday. — AP.

**Tax incentive**

The French president, Jacques Chirac, admitted yesterday that many people were disappointed by the slow pace of reforms in his first year but raised the prospect of tax cuts in 1997 as an incentive for further spending cuts. — Reuter.

**Chretien charged**

The Canadian prime minister, Jean Chretien, who grabbed a protester by the jaw during a public event in February, was yesterday charged with assault, the Canadian Press agency reported. A judge ordered him to appear in court on June 6. — Reuter.

**US firm on Iraq**

The US ambassador, Madeleine Albright, has defended her country's tough stance on oil-for-food talks between the United Nations and Iraq, saying: "We know Saddam Hussein is very clever in manipulating aspects of this policy and we want to make sure... the fact and medicine get to the people of Iraq." — Reuter.

**Truce ignored**

Young street fighters renewed territorial battles in the capi-

## Food of love stamped out

**A**S you and your loved one glide down the peaceful canals of Venice, your thoughts may turn to social security contributions, writes *John Hooper in Rome*.

Unromantic maybe, but as of this week a fair number of tourists who would like to be serenaded in a gondola might find themselves pondering Italy's welfare bureaucracy.

Nobody, it seems, has been paying the equivalent of National Insurance for the entertainers who play for gondola passengers. The gondoliers, fearful that they might be liable, decided at the weekend to stop serenading till further notice.

A spokeswoman for the entertainers said that without the stamps the 120 or so freelance serenaders would not qualify for pensions.

It is not clear who is responsible for the payments, gondoliers or travel agents. But a spokesman for the gondoliers said until a solution is found, the serenades are suspended.

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Politeness pays dividends, page 12

BT launches free helpline for small businesses, page 12

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer Telephone: 0171-239-9610 Fax: 0171-833-4456

Finance Guardian



Cool heads... British Airways staff replace traditional felt hats with new straw models for summer wear, made by family firm J Albert & Co of Luton PHOTOGRAPH BY STEWART GOLDSTEIN

Rich nations seek deal to close costly UN bodies

THE Group of Seven leading industrial nations is planning to use next month's summit in Lyons as a launching pad for a new 'partnership' with developing countries...

Unctad, and its industrial counterpart, Unido, seen as immediate candidates for reform or even phasing out. Officials preparing for the summit believe the presence of the IMF managing director, Michel Camdessus, the President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, and the director-general of the World Trade Organisation, Renato Ruggiero, will smoothe the process of reform.

Germany to sell from its own gold reserves to finance its domestic fiscal deficit rather than cut spending. Similarly, some countries, including Germany and Japan, believe that the debt reduction plan, which would effectively lead to the prepayment (equivalent to cancellation) of 90 per cent of the multilateral debt of poor countries, goes too far.

Both countries fear that the scheme, now keenly supported by the United Kingdom, the United States and France, might undermine the financial integrity of the IMF and World Bank. Among the most vulnerable of the UN organisations for abolition or reform is thought to be Unido, which is funded by individual Western donors and has already experienced withdrawal by the US.

Consumer credit firm set to grab debt collector

TALKS are advanced on a takeover by the credit company Provident Financial of Intrum, the largest debt collector in Britain and Europe, the Guardian has learned. Should the deal go ahead, it would mean a potential headache for regulators.

A senior Intrum source said Provident had been in to examine the company's books, and suggest an offer was imminent. Combined profits for the two groups total more than £115 million. There would be possible conflicts of interest between Provident's credit-supply role and Intrum's debt-collecting activities, but the Office of Fair Trading, which regulates both types of business, would be powerless to stop the takeover.

Eurotunnel faces action in courts

ANGRY Eurotunnel shareholders yesterday threatened legal action against the company's bankers, calling on them to write off huge amounts of its £8 billion debt. The chairman of the French Adacis Eurotunnel shareholders' association, Albert Gauffret, said he was 'extremely unhappy' over a proposed bank plan to allow lenders to own up to 49 per cent of Eurotunnel in a debt-for-equity swap.

But some of these banks have strongly criticised the refinancing programme with a number demanding an increased stake in the company if they agree to convert between £2.5 billion to £3.5 billion of debt. Mr Gauffret said that the banks should write off two-thirds of their debt and convert the outstanding debt into shares at between 25 to 35 francs per share, the amount the stock was bought at by shareholders instead of the market price.

MEB agrees to American bid

AN AGREED £1.7 billion offer for the Midlands Electricity power company is expected to be announced later today. General Electric, the US generator, has clinched a friendly bid at about 430p a share. GPU, which operated the nuclear plant at the heart of the 1978 Three Mile Island disaster, may not, however, find the bidding easy. The British generator PowerGen is likely to decide this week whether to mount a legal challenge against Trade and Industry Secretary Ian Lang's veto last month of its bid for MEB.

Should judicial review of Mr Lang's decision produce a result in PowerGen's favour, it could return to the fray and bid again for MEB, in which it holds a 20 per cent stake. There have also been suggestions that another US bidder, Houston Industries, may counter-bid for MEB. To complicate matters further, Duke Power, which the Government wooed as a trade buyer for Britain's nuclear reactors, has been rumoured as another possible suitor.

Co-op gives 'divi' an electronic jolt

THE Co-op is taking a step towards reintroducing fully its historic dividend by bringing its oldest customer benefit into the electronic age. A swipe-card 'divi' launched today, is set to pay out more than £1.5 million next year in Northern Ireland and forecasts that Co-op membership will double in the province. The £2 million Belfast Co-op initiative, in all 26 stores across Ulster, develops a pilot project tested in nine stores in Scotland and the south-east of England since September.

It is launched amid increasing retail competition in Northern Ireland and repeated calls from Co-op members during their annual congresses for full return of the dividend. The new card will be available to 35,000 Belfast Co-op members, amid hopes that its introduction will raise membership to 80,000. Members will receive a 5 per cent repayment from their purchases of Co-op brand goods, about 40 per cent of total sales. Cards will be swiped through an electronic system, immediately recording purchases and calculating dividend. Payments will be made twice a year, with an expected £50,000 a year - the odd penny from the 'divi' - likely to benefit voluntary and community groups.

Dividends declined rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s as payments and administrative costs threatened to outstrip benefits. Less than 1 per cent of Co-op business now awards the 'divi', traditionally paid at one shilling (5p) in the pound and the source of clothes, shoes and school-books for many poor families. The Co-op scheme begins as Tesco and Sainsbury are examining potential sites in the province. The Co-op has anticipated new competition by launching a petrol price war and announcing plans for a £5 million superstore in Belfast.

Investors look Sky-ward for soothing set of results

ASHAKY stock market will look to some of the UK's biggest companies for support, starting with British Sky Broadcasting and BP today. BSkyB should show sharply higher third-quarter profits of £71.2 million, against £49 million a year ago. BP is expected to report a jump in first-quarter profits from £461 million to between £522 million and £594 million, thanks to higher oil prices. But on Thursday Royal Dutch/Shell Group is expected to report barely changed first-quarter results.

News in brief IBM to license Mac system

Apple, the troubled US computer firm, is to license its wanted Macintosh operating system to IBM, in an agreement launched yesterday. IBM will be allowed to sublicense the system to other computer makers, and while Big Blue will not make Macs, analysts expect the agreement would help Apple boost the number of Macintosh users. The agreement is a boon for Apple's flagging Macintosh market share, but analysts said it was not wide-ranging enough.

American Notebook Clinton basks in jobs sunshine



Mark Tran

THE US economy is giving precious little help to Senator Bob Dole in his faltering bid to evict President Clinton from the White House. Each nugget of information released this year only reinforces the impression of sound economic leadership by Mr Clinton, although much of the credit has to go to the Federal Reserve chairman, Alan Greenspan.

stagnant wages and general economic insecurity that Patrick Buchanan tapped into for a brief moment. But recent studies from the administration and business organisations have undercut the conventional wisdom that many of the new jobs created are hamburger-flipper jobs. The Council of Economic Advisers concluded in a report last month that more than two-thirds of the new jobs that had come into being since 1993 were paid above-median wages, that the vast majority of new jobs were full-time and that the proportion of workers having to do several jobs had remained constant since the 1980s.

For a team that won the 1992 election on the motto 'It's the economy stupid', the state of the economy alone would steer Mr Clinton to a second term. Things could still blow up in his face: a stock market meltdown; an unexpected slowing of the economy. But one of Wall Street's most astute economists, Stephen Roach of Morgan Stanley, has already declared the President a sure thing in November.

There is evidence that the administration's message is getting through to the public. Consumer confidence, as measured by the Conference Board, a private business research group, hit its highest level in six years in April. So what can go wrong? There are fears that inflation is poised to make a comeback after being under wraps for a decade. Long-term rates, reflecting those anxieties, have cracked through 7 per cent and some economists are predicting a hike to 8 per cent early next year. Higher long-term rates will slow down the economy, but by then the election will have come and gone.

While most political commentators have declared Mr Dole out for the count because of his political ineffectiveness, it is the changing American economy that will prove his greatest liability and Mr Clinton's most potent weapon, as the political season picks up steam.

Despite the fears of the bond market, considerable disagreement exists on the inflation threat. Labour economists are what really counts in measuring inflation, despite all the fuss over rising commodity prices, and wage inflation has been remarkably stable at around 3 per cent for more than two years now, well below the previous cyclical peak of 4.3 per cent during February 1995.

Yet only a few months ago, the economic outlook hardly looked promising for Mr Clinton. The economy grew a paltry 0.5 per cent in the last three months of 1995 and the whiff of recession hung in the air. But following last year's whimper, the economy started 1996 with a bang, creating 631,000 jobs in February and then 178,000 jobs in March. Initial estimates for first-quarter growth came in at a robust 2.8 per cent, a scare for the bond markets but encouraging news for American workers.

Some economists go so far as to argue that if the unemployment rate falls to 4 per cent by the end of the decade, wage inflation will still remain low because of outsourcing, downsizing and competition from cheap labour around the world. In any case the vigilant Fed stands watch, and Mr Greenspan will probably raise rates at the end of the summer in a pre-emptive strike against inflation.

The April jobs report brought further good tidings for the administration, with the unemployment rate dropping to 6.4 per cent, its lowest since February 1996.

What really strikes terror into the White House is a stock market crash. There are red flags, such as the ratio of share price to earnings. The current P/E ratio of 26.4 is higher than in 1997, before the market plunge. Another warning sign of a peaking bull market is the scramble by private companies to go public with initial public offerings.

Even the fact that job growth was stagnant, just 2,000 jobs created, was a positive development, calming Wall Street fears of an overheating economy. But for political purposes the 5.4 per cent rate was a huge boost. In an election year it is, unsurprisingly, the unemployment rate rather than the yield on the benchmark 30-year treasury bond that counts.

George Bush was undone, apart from his lack of campaigning talent, by a steady stream of dismal unemployment figures stuck at 7 per cent and over, even hitting 9 per cent in key states such as California. It was unfortunate for Mr Bush that the economy just started to turn around as Mr Clinton took office. Since then, as the White House never tires to point out, the economy has created 8.4 million jobs.

True, there has been much fretting over the downsizing. Closer links between Lucas Industries, the car parts manufacturer, and the American Varsity Corporation, which is in the same field, are being examined by both companies. It was announced yesterday.

Rowland staying on David Rowland is to stay on as chairman of Lloyd's of London for a further year, the insurance market will confirm today. The move will take effect when his current three-year contract expires at the end of 1996.

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Racing

Baroque can do an Italian job on the Derby hopes

Ron Cox

FIVE Derby entries do battle in the Chester Vase today, but victory can go to the only colt not entered at Epsom...

High Baroque had the speed to win over a mile first time out, but he is destined to make his mark over middle distances and the stable clearly has its horses in good shape for the three-day Chester meeting.

Barry Hills must always be afforded the greatest respect at Chester. He has been a surprise if Prince Of My Heart is good enough to improve his trainer's fine record.

claiming rider, who won on the stable's Mawing at Warwick yesterday. Michael Tabor, owner of High Baroque, was on the mark with Dr Massini at Kempton yesterday.



Fast filly... Please Suzanne romps home ahead of Baize in yesterday's Ballygalion Stud Stakes at Kempton

Chester runners and riders with TV form

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 2.10 Carmine Lake, 2.40 Legal Fight, 3.10 High Baroque.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 2.40 Grosvenor Maiden Stakes, 3.10 Chester Vase, 3.40 Royal of Chester Handicap.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 6.00 Polly Moon, 6.30 Doncaster, 7.00 Theoria.

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Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 8.30 Doncaster, 9.00 Doncaster, 9.30 Doncaster.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 3.10 Chester Vase, 3.40 Royal of Chester Handicap, 4.10 Walker Sells & Way Handicap.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 4.10 Walker Sells & Way Handicap, 4.40 Prince of Wales Handicap, 5.10 Eastern Prompts.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 5.10 Eastern Prompts, 5.40 Prince of Wales Handicap, 6.10 Eastern Prompts.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 6.10 Eastern Prompts, 6.40 Prince of Wales Handicap, 7.10 Eastern Prompts.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 7.10 Eastern Prompts, 7.40 Prince of Wales Handicap, 8.10 Eastern Prompts.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 8.10 Eastern Prompts, 8.40 Prince of Wales Handicap, 9.10 Eastern Prompts.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 9.10 Eastern Prompts, 9.40 Prince of Wales Handicap, 10.10 Eastern Prompts.

Newton Abbot (N.H.)

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 1.55 Otisom, 2.55 The Star, 3.55 The Star.

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Wincanton (N.H.) tonight

Table with 2 columns: Race Name, Runners and Riders. Includes races like 6.45 Ashwell Bay, 7.45 General Crack, 8.45 General Crack.

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Advertisement for 'ST AFFLETS & CATALOGUE' featuring various racing-related items.

Advertisement for 'RACELINE' featuring a grid of numbers and the text 'CHESTER 101, NEWTON ABBOT 102, DONCASTER 103, W'NCANTON 104'.



Owns city

Cricket County Championship: Kent v Lancashire Patel turns up trumps

Paul Weaver at Canterbury
IN CRICKET folklore here Min is still some way behind Mynn, the Lion of Kent. But all that could change. Min Patel, Kent's slow left-arm, returned to the scene of crime for the second time after the first day...



A cut above... Michael Atherton finds the boundary for Lancashire on his way to 98 in what proved a losing cause against Kent

Motor Racing Alesi driving for a fall

Alan Henry
AS Damon Hill savoured his victory in Sunday's San Marino Grand Prix — and the 20-point lead in the world championship it produced — an ominous question mark hung over the professional driver...

Glamorgan v Yorkshire Gough proves a crazy catalyst

David Plattner in Cardiff
DARREN GOUGH'S capacity to make things happen transformed what had appeared to be a routine victory for Glamorgan into an unlikely success for Yorkshire...

Gough had done little with the ball in the match, one for 36 his figures overall, but within the first three balls of his return he had logged the memory of the England selection...

pounded with disbelief, well out of his ground. Gough yoked Croft with his next ball and White joined in the run when he tempted the hapless Butcher into an injudicious hook...

was bowled. Morris perished at 135 when he gave himself room to drive Hartley. That paved the way for the stonemasons but Dale, Maynard and Cottee played themselves in only to get out...

Somerset v Surrey Runs by the irrelevant ton

David Foot at Taunton
IT IS as well to get meaningless cricket out of the way by early May. There was never much chance of a result on a last day when Surrey started 191 runs behind on first innings...

Surrey finished on 410 for four, a flattering statistic to be cherished only by Adam Hollis and Graham Thorpe. Hollis completed his second hundred of the match, the first to do so for Surrey since Alan Butcher in 1984...

At least for Peter Bowler there was the encouragement of a double century from the match. He has moved up this season to open the innings again and there does not seem to be much wrong with Somerset's batting.

Irani hundred steers Essex to victory

RONNIE IRANI, the England all-rounder who has been tipped for promotion, scored his second century in three seasons at New Road as Essex opened their championship campaign with a five-wicket win over Worcestershire...

In 1994 he made 119 when Essex scored 405 to win. Yesterday he was unbeat upon with 110 off 86 balls after his side had suffered an unexpected collapse as they chased 187 for victory of 43 overs...

Essex were in dire straits at 32 for five when the Lancashire batsman Paul Grayson for a partnership that turned the tide decisively in Essex's favour...

The visitors, needing 137 to win, began badly with Cork removing Gregor Macmillan in the first over and Devon Malcolm sending back Ben Smith in the fourth...

Scoreboard section containing detailed match statistics for Essex vs Worcestershire, Lancashire vs Glamorgan, and Kent vs Lancashire.

Scoreboard section containing detailed match statistics for Somerset vs Surrey.

Rugby League Offiah set to run at Bath

Paul Fitzpatrick
MARTIN OFFIAH looks to have won his battle to be fit for tomorrow's first cross-code challenge between Wigan and Bath at Maine Road...

With more than 20,000 tickets sold before the weekend and Simon Haughton, two-time international, among the substitutes...

Wigan never do anything by halves, and West can be trusted when he says they are taking it "very seriously, it's a big match for us and we want to do well". That sentiment was underscored by Wigan's 19-man squad...

Basketball

Bullets primed to aim higher after hitting the big target

Robert Pryce
HARRY WRUBLEWSKI set himself a daunting task when he took over the Birmingham Bullets but he may now have completed the harder part...

With the signing of the England centre Trevor Gordon and the development of the young Emilio Esteve, the Bullets were transformed into one of the league's most formidable teams around Christmas...

Tennis

Lloyd hopes to stay out of Africa

DAVID LLOYD. Great Britain's Davis Cup captain, is hoping his team's next Euro-African Zone Group Two match, against Ghana in July, will be played at home rather than in Africa...

The tie takes place shortly before Britain's two leading players Tim Henman and Goran Ivanisevic win over Slovenia in Newcastle at the weekend because of a virus, and Greg Rusedski are due to fly out to Atlanta for the Olympic Games...

Officially Briatore picked his words with care. "I never believed it would be so difficult to change some major structure in the team, in this case the two drivers," he said. "You face a new problem, new situation and I blame sometimes myself and the team, not just the driver, as we need to modify the system of work. I believe our drivers must be much more careful in their detailed approach."

Cricket

Benson & Hedges Cup News and Scores
Derbyshire 31 Middlesex 40
Durham 28 Northants 41
Essex 33 Nottingham 42
Glamorgan 34 Somerset 43
Gloucestershire 35 Surrey 44
Hampshire 36 Warwickshire 45
Kent 37 Worcestershire 46
Leicestershire 38 Lancashire 47
Lincs 39 Yorkshire 48

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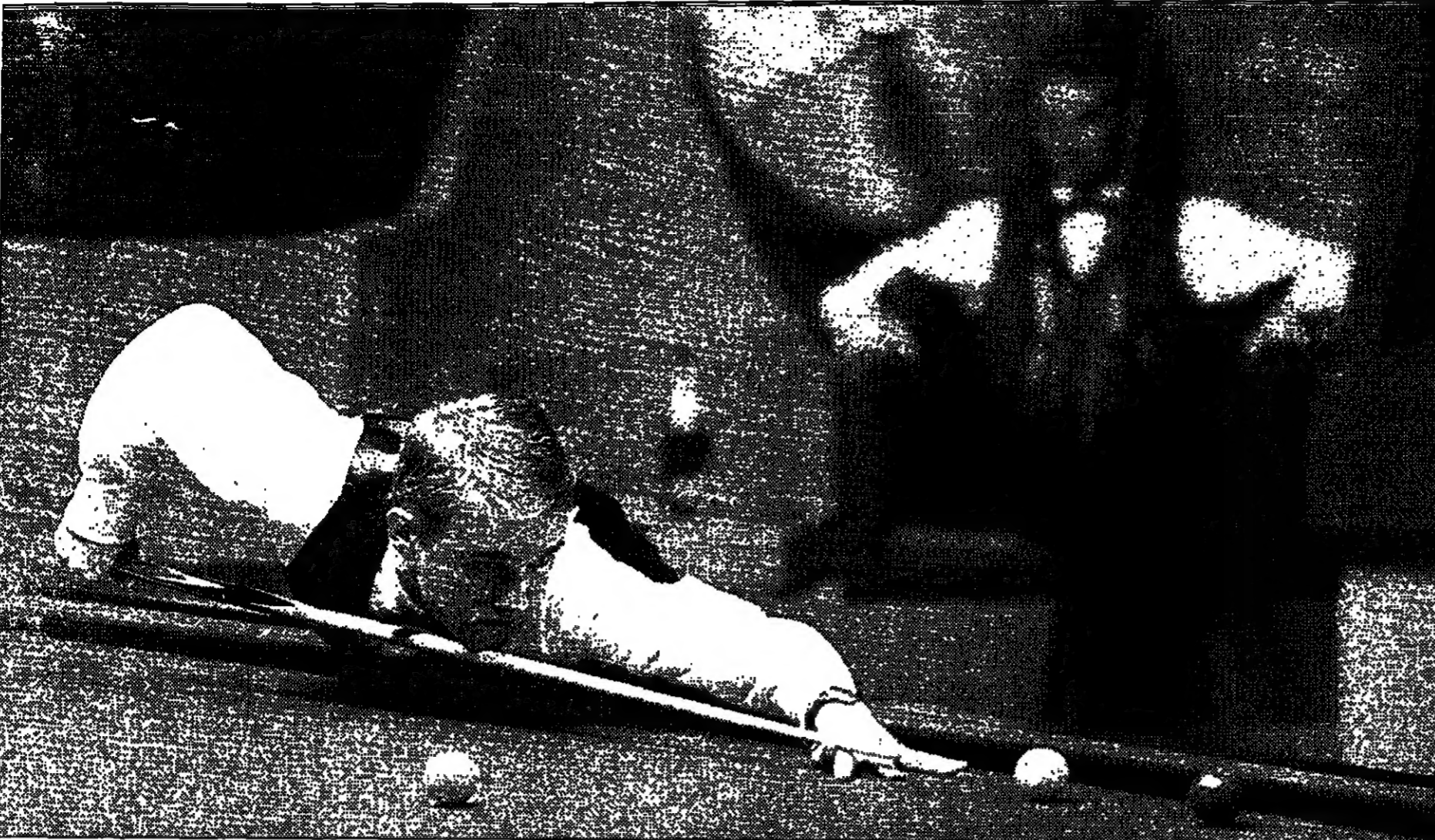
Kia. wer... 9.9... Advertisement on the left margin.

The irresistible rise of Karrie Webb, page 14  
England reconsider China trip, page 14

Lancashire's batsmen self-destruct, page 15  
Benetton ponder Alesi's future, page 15

# SportsGuardian

## SNOOKER: THE WORLD CHAMPION TURNS THE SCREW ON EBDON



# Dead-eye Hendry in his element

David Hopps in Sheffield on a millionaire whose pallid face never gives anything away

**A**S STEPHEN Hendry inexorably approached a record-equalling sixth Embassy World Championship at the Crucible Theatre last night, the overriding question was whether he would surrender for once to an overt display of emotion.

A cautiously raised eyebrow, perhaps, or even something as extravagant as an introspective glance at the ceiling. No one in British sport can rival Hendry's unexpressive ways. By comparison the England cricket captain Michael Atherton is a wash with melodrama: the golfer Nick Faldo a veritable card. By the mid-evening break in last night's final session Hendry led England's Peter Ebdon 17-11, one frame away from matching the record of six wins achieved in modern times by Steve Davis and Ray Reardon. An odds-on favourite before the tournament — his last defeat here was by Steve James in the 1991 quarter-finals — Hendry had described himself

as "a lousy bet" but, being a proud Scot, had probably invested a few quid on himself at 6-4 when briefly trailing in the first round. Three of his five winning finals had been against Jimmy White, whose celebrated potting ability collapsed under the pressure. This year The Whirlwind was replaced by an irksome breeze in the shape of Ebdon, the sort of opponent who might have been designed specifically to get under his skin. Ebdon's description of his previous three tournament conquests — White, Steve Davis and Ronnie O'Sullivan — as the best trio in the game was interpreted as a deliberate slight upon Hendry. Ebdon's theatrical behaviour — he collapsed in a heap of fake exhaustion after beating Davis and is prone to bellowing "Cumm on!" at himself after winning a close frame — is also as far removed from Hendry's persona as one can get.

## Victory for the man who came second



Richard Williams

**D**ID YOU see Kevin Keegan on Sunday night, when a season's dreams had just turned to ashes? It was almost enough to give you hope for the human race. Minutes after losing the title to Manchester United, Newcastle's director of football was being asked by Barry Davies if he had a message for Alex Ferguson, with whom he had recently and so publicly fallen out. "In this game," he said, "the winners can laugh and the losers have got to make their own arrangements. So to him, have a good laugh. And I'm going to make my own arrangements, with Terry McDermott, who's the best signing I ever made at this club, to be honest with you. We won't go and have a drink. We'll go and sit somewhere and mope for a couple of hours. We'll soon get over it. We'll have a holiday and we'll be back playing the same way next year, and hopefully we'll just last out a bit better."

If Sir John Hall ever doubted his own wisdom in giving Keegan a 10-year contract, the spirit behind those words would have reassured him. Many neutrals, even those who wish Manchester United no ill, will be sorry that the city of Newcastle was not able to welcome the championship back to St James' Park on Sunday. But Keegan's words, spoken through lips that were all but trembling with emotion, reaffirmed the commitment to keep going until the job is done. I was never much of a fan of Keegan during his playing days. All that scurrying and hustling didn't please the armchair purist. But as a manager he is hard to hold in anything other than affection and respect. There is no side to Keegan, as far as one can tell. In his dealings with the media he is invariably frank and interesting, refreshingly capable of admitting his own errors. He is a man of flesh and blood, and the emotions that led him into a touchline scuffle with Billy Bremner during the Charity Shield match all those years ago are never far from the surface. Anyone who

cares to join the pilgrims at Maiden Castle, where the Magpies use Durham University's grounds for training, will see Keegan and his pal McDermott extracting more fun out of a five-a-side game than anyone bar Big Ron. And unlike some of his contemporaries, Keegan does not just perform when the television lights are on and the notebooks are out. I spotted him at Heathrow Airport one evening early this season, sitting alone in the lounge, reading a paper and waiting for the flight home. Three or four fans approached him. They wanted autographs, which he signed, and they wanted to wish him luck, which he accepted gracefully, and then they wanted a quick chat about the weekend's matches, which he gave them willingly, looking them in the eyes and making them feel as though they were part of his world. Which, of course, they are. They have a nice life, people like Keegan and Ferguson, whose new salary is reported to be around £900,000 a year. But we know that such comfort carries a price-tag. Take Luis Fernandez, the gifted young coach of Paris Saint-Germain, who once played alongside Platini, Tigana and Giresse in the best midfield France has produced. His PSG are second in the French league, their home crowds have risen from 26,000 to 37,000 during his two years in charge, and tomorrow they play Rapid Vienna in the final of the Cup Winners' Cup. Yet Fernandez is stepping down and taking next year off, featuring a heart attack at 36, listening to his wife's warnings about the perils of stress.

**A**ND at AC Milan Fabio Capello is moving on after leading the club to a fourth Serie A title in five years. Capello, 49, has spent those years managing the transition from the Gullit-Rijkaard-Van Basten era but now, having kept a huge squad of expensive stars reasonably happy, he is fed up with falling to get straight answers from Silvio Berlusconi and his footballing consigliere Adriano Galliani. Leaving behind him a squad admirably placed to challenge for next season's European Cup, he is moving to Spal, where Lorenzo Sant, the ambitious president of Real Madrid, is expecting similar feats. Men like Keegan, Fernandez and Capello are the reason I can't get interested in fantasy football games. Watching their struggles, real life seems quite enough.

This *instant* flash

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### Guardian Crossword No 20,646

Set by Shed

**Across**

- Work out 2 divided by 500 (6)
- Spirit of war? Magna Carta embodies it (8)
- Weep about man on point of being jovial (6)
- Bright as silver but going to waste (8)
- Not the distaff side of oriental philosopher? (11)
- Not trading; therefore receiving business qualification (7)
- A blemish in Mother's make-up (7)
- Symptomatic relief is little consolation (4,7)
- Well trained for love, perverted, about to perish (8)
- The party's over — spoon-bender interrupts solemn occasion (6)

**Down**

- Singularly sleek and tall — almost fleshless (8)
- Judge female fool? (6)
- Butler fell on beetle (6)
- Cat and corgi I'm training to make you laugh and cry (5-5)
- Replicas of supporters (8)
- Beginning of writer is late to get coal (8)
- Robe for jockey at length obtaining a degree (8)
- Pay attention to raised stick, even (4,4)
- See 20
- Take a vote on man becoming like God (10)
- Plant going zero distance under water (8)
- Worker — one left in the union is a frustrated character (8)

**16** Elder, crocus and edelweiss heads in flower by the fence (8)  
**19** Pout about ship in the foam (6)  
**20,8** Heads take heart from winning number (3,5)  
**21** See 7

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**G2 page 13**

May 6 1996  
Living  
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High-e  
inside